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COMUS, A MASKE, BY JOHN MILTON; PRINTED FROM THE ORIGINAL EDITION OF 1637.

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COMUS

A

MASKE

BY

JOHN

MILTON

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THE PERSONS

THE ATTENDANT SPIRIT AFTERWARDS IN THE HABIT OF THYRSIS

COMUS WITH HIS CREW

THE LADY

FIRST BROTHER

SECOND BROTHER

SABRINA THE NYMPH

A MASKE

Presented
At Ludlow Castle,
1634:

On Michaelmasse night, before the
Right Honorable,

IOHN Earle of Bridgewater, Vicount BRACKLY,
Lord Præsident of Wales, And one of
His Maiesties most honorable
Privie Counsell.

Eheu quid volui misero mihi!
floribus austrum Perditus —

London,
Printed for HVMPHREY ROBINSON,
At the signe of the Three Pidgeons in
Pauls Church-yard. 1637.

THE EPISTLE DEDICATORIE.

TO THE RIGHT
Honorable,
IOHN Lord Vicount BRACLY,
Son and heire apparent to the Earle
of Bridgewater, &c.

MY LORD,

This Poem, which receiv'd its first occasion of birth from your selfe, and others of your noble familie, and much honour from your own Person in the performance, now returns againe to make a finall dedication of it selfe to you. Although not openly acknowledg'd by the Author, yet it is a legitimate offspring, so lovely, and so much desired, that the often copying of it hath tir'd my pen to give my severall friends satisfaction, and brought me to a necessitie of producing it to the publick view; and now to offer it up in all rightfull devotion to those faire hopes, and rare Endowments of your much-promising Youth, which give a full assurance, to all that know you, of a future excellence. Live sweet Lord to be the honour of your Name, and receive this as your owne, from the hands of him, who hath by many favours beene long oblig'd to your most honour'd Parents, and as in this repræsentation your attendant Thyrsis, so now in all reall expression

Your faithfull, and most
humble Servant,
H. LAWES.

A MASKE PERFORMED BEFORE THE PRÆSIDENT OF WALES AT LUDLOW, 1634. THE FIRST SCENE DISCOVERS A WILD WOOD. THE ATTENDANT SPIRIT DESCENDS OR ENTERS.

BEFORE the starrie threshold of Joves Court
My mansion is, where those immortall shapes
Of bright aëreall Spirits live insphear'd
In Regions mild of calme and serene aire,
Above the smoake and stirre of this dim spot
Which men call Earth, and with low-thoughted care
Confin'd, and pester'd in this pin-fold here,
Strive to keepe up a fraile, and feaverish being
Unmindfull of the crowne that Vertue gives
After this mortall change to her true Servants
Amongst the enthron'd gods on Sainted seats.
Yet some there be that by due steps aspire
To lay their just hands on that golden key
That ope's the palace of Æternity:
To such my errand is, and but for such
I would not soile these pure ambrosial weeds
With the ranck vapours of this Sin-worne mould.
But to my task. Neptune besides the sway
Of every salt Flood, and each ebbing Streame
Tooke in my lot 'twixt high, and neather Jove
Imperial rule of all the Sea-girt Iles
That like to rich, and various gemms inlay
The unadorned bosome of the Deepe,
Which he to grace his tributarie gods
By course commits to severall government
And gives them leave to weare their Saphire crowns,
And weild their little tridents, but this Ile
The greatest, and the best of all the maine
He quarters to his blu-hair'd deities,
And all this tract that fronts the falling Sun
A noble Peere of mickle trust, and power
Has in his charge, with temper'd awe to guide
An old, and haughtie Nation proud in Armes:
Where his faire off-spring nurs't in Princely lore

Are comming to attend their Fathers state,
And new-entrusted Scepter, but their way
Lies through the perplex't paths of this dreare wood,
The nodding horror of whose shadie brows
Threats the forlorne and wandring Passinger.
And here their tender age might suffer perill
But that by quick command from Soveraigne Jove
I was dispatcht for their defence, and guard,
And listen why, for I will tell yee now
What never yet was heard in Tale or Song
From old, or moderne Bard in hall or bowre.
Bacchus that first from out the purple Grape
Crush't the sweet poyson of mis-used Wine
After the Tuscan Mariners transform'd
Coasting, the Tyrrhene shore, as the winds listed,
On Circes Iland fell (who knowes not Circe
The daughter of the Sun? whose charmed Cup
Whoever tasted lost his upright shape,
And downward fell into a grovling Swine)
This Nymph that gaz'd upon his clustring locks
With Ivie berries wreath'd, and his blith youth
Had by him, ere he parted thence, a Son
Much like his Father, but his Mother more,
Whom therefore she brought up and Comus nam'd,
Who ripe, and frolick of his full growne age
Roaving the Celtick, and Iberian fields
At last betakes him to this ominous wood,
And in thick shelter of black shades imbowr'd
Excells his Mother at her mightie Art
Offring to every wearie Travailer
His orient liquor in a Chrystall glasse
To quench the drouth of Phœbus, which as they tast
(For most doe taste through fond intemperate thirst)
Soone as the Potion works, their humane count'nance
Th' expresse resemblance of the gods is chang'd
Into some brutish forme of Wolfe, or Beare
Or Ounce, or Tiger, Hog, or bearded Goat,
All other parts remaining as they were,

And they, so perfect in their miserie,
Not once perceive their foule disfigurement,
But boast themselves more comely then before
And all their friends; and native home forget
To roule with pleasure in a sensuall stie.
Therefore when any favour'd of high Jove
Chances to passe through this adventrous glade,
Swift as the Sparkle of a glancing Starre
I shoote from heav'n, to give him safe convoy,
As now I doe: but first I must put off
These my skie robes spun out of Iris wooffe,
And take the weeds and likenesse of a Swaine,
That to the service of this house belongs,
Who with his soft Pipe, and smooth-dittied Song,
Well knows to still the wild winds when they roare,
And hush the waving woods, nor of lesse faith,
And in this office of his Mountaine watch,
Likeliest, and neerest to the present aide
Of this occasion. But I heare the tread
Of hatefull steps, I must be viewlesse now.

Comus enters with a Charming rod in one hand, his Glasse in the other, with him a rout of Monsters headed like sundry sorts of wilde Beasts, but otherwise like Men and Women, their apparell glistring, they come iu [in] making a riotous and unruly noise, with Torches in their hands.

COMUS. The starre that bids the Shepheard fold,
Now the top of heav'n doth hold,
And the gilded Carre of Day
His glowing Axle doth allay,
In the steepe Atlantik streame,
And the slope Sun his upward beame
Shoots against the duskie Pole,
Pacing toward the other gole
Of his Chamber in the East.
Meane while welcome Joy, and Feast,
Midnight shout, and revelrie,

Tipsie dance, and Jollitie.
Braid your Locks with rosie Twine,
Dropping odours, dropping Wine.
Rigor now is gone to bed,
And Advice with scrupulous head,
Strict Age, and sowre Severitie
With their grave Sawes in slumber lie.
We that are of purer fire,
Immitate the starrie quire,
Who in their nightly watchfull Spheares,
Lead in swift round the Months and Yeares.
The Sounds, and Seas with all their finnie drove,
Now to the Moone in wavering Morrice move,
And on the tawny sands and shelves,
Trip the pert Fairies and the dapper Elves;
By dimpled Brooke, and Fountaine brim,
The Wood-nymphs deckt with daisies trim,
Their merry wakes, and pastimes keepe,
What hath night to doe with sleepe?
Night hath better sweets to prove,
Venus now wakes, and wakens Love.
Come let us our rights begin
'Tis onely day-light that makes Sin
Which these dun shades will ne're report.
Haile Goddesse of Nocturnall sport
Dark-vaild Cotytto, t' whom the secret flame
Of mid-night Torches burnes; mysterious Dame
That ne're at [art] call'd, but when the Dragon woome
Of Stygian darknesse spets her thickest gloome
And makes one blot of all the aire,
Stay thy clowdie Ebon chaire,
Wherein thou rid'st with Hecat', and befriend
Us thy vow'd Priests, till utmost end
Of all thy dues be done, and none left out
Ere the blabbing Easterne scout
The nice Morne on th' Indian steepe
From her cabin'd loop hole peepe,
And to the tel-tale Sun discry

Wur conceal'd Solemnity.
Come, knit hands, and beate the ground
In a light fantastick round.

THE MEASURE.

Breake off, breake off, I feele the different pace
Of some chast footing neere about this ground,
Run to your shrouds, within these Brakes, and Trees
Our number may affright: Some Virgin sure
(For so I can distinguish by mine Art)
Benighted in these woods. Now to my charmes
And to my wilie trains, I shall e're long
Be well stock't with as faire a Heard as graz'd
About my Mother Circe. Thus I hurle
My dazling Spells into the spungie aire
Of power to cheate the eye with bleare illusion,
And give it false presentments, lest the place
And my queint habits breed astonishment,
And put the Damsel to suspicious flight,
Which must not be, for that's against my course;
I under faire prætents of friendly ends,
And wel plac't words of glozing courtesie
Baited with reasons not unplausible
Wind me into the easie hearted man,
And hug him into snares; when once her eye
Hath met the vertue of this Magick dust,
I shall appeare some harmlesse Villager
Whom thrift keepes up about his Country geare
But here she comes, I fairly step aside
And hearken, if I may, her businesse here.

THE LADIE ENTERS.

This way the noise was, if mine eare be true
My best guide now, me thought it was the sound
Of Riot, and ill manag'd Merriment,
Such as the jocond Flute, or gamesome Pipe
Stirs up among the loose unleter'd Hinds
When for their teeming Flocks, and granges full

In wanton dance they praise the bounteous Pan,
And thanke the gods amisse. I should be loath
To meet the rudenesse, and swill'd insolence
Of such late Wassailers; yet ô [oh] where else
Shall I informe my unacquainted feet
In the blind mazes of this tangled wood?
My Brothers when they saw me wearied out
With this long way, resolving here to lodge
Under the spreading favour of these Pines
Stept as they se'd to the next Thicket side
To bring me Berries, or such cooling fruit
As the kind hospitable woods provide.
They left me then, when the gray-hooded Ev'n
Like a sad Votarist in Palmer weeds
Rose from the hindmost wheels of Phœbus waine.
But where they are, and why they came not back
Is now the labour of my thoughts, 'tis likeliest
They had ingag'd their wandring steps too far,
And envious darknesse, e're they could returne,
Had stolne them from me, else ô [oh] theevish Night
Why shouldst thou, but for some felonious end
In thy darke lanterne thus close up the Stars,
That nature hung in Heav'n, and fill'd their lamps
With everlasting oile to give due light
To the misled, and lonely Travailer.
This is the place, as well as I may guesse
Whence even now the tumult of loud Mirth
Was rife, and perfect in my listening eare,
Yet nought but single darknesse doe I find,
What might this be? a thousand fantasies
Begin to throng into my memorie
Of calling shapes, and beckning shadows dire,
And ayrie tongues, that syllable mens names
On Sands, and Shoars, and desert Wildernesses.
These thoughts may startle well, but not astound
The vertuous mind, that ever walks attended
By a strong siding champion Conscience.—
O welcome pure-ey'd Faith, white-handed Hope

Thou flittering Angel girt with golden wings,
And thou unblemish't forme of Chastitie
I see yee visibly, and now beleeve
That he, the Supreme good, t' whom all things ill
Are but as slavish officers of vengeance
Would send a glistring Guardian if need were
To keepe my life, and honour unassail'd.
Was I deceiv'd, or did a sable cloud
Turne forth her silver lining on the night?
I did not erre, there does a sables cloud
Turne forth her silver lining on the night
And casts a gleame over this tufted Grove.
I cannot hallow to my Brothers, but
Such noise as I can make to be heard fardest
Ile venter, for my new enliv'nd spirits
Prompt me; and they perhaps are not farre off.

SONG.

Sweet echo, sweetest Nymph that liv'st unseene
Within thy ayrie shell
By slow Meander's margent greene,
And in the violet-imbroider'd vale
Where the love-lorne Nightingale
Nightly to thee her sad Song mourneth well.
Canst thou not tell me of a gentle Paire
That likest thy Narcissus are?
O if thou have
Hid them in some flowrie Cave,
Tell me but where
Sweet Queene of Parlie, Daughter of the Sphare,
So maist thou be translated to the skies,
And give resounding grace to all Heav'ns Harmonies.

COMUS. Can any mortall mixture of Earths mould
Breath such Divine inchanting ravishment?
Sure something holy lodges in that brest,
And with these raptures moves the vocal aire
To testifie his hidden residence;

How sweetly did they float upon the wings
Of Silence, through the emptie-vaulted night
At every fall smoothing the Raven downe
Of darknesse till she smil'd: I have oft heard
My mother Circe with the Sirens three
Amidst the flowrie-kirtl'd Naiades
Culling their Potent hearbs, and balefull drugs
Who as they sung, would take the prison'd soule
And lap it in Elysium, Scylla wept,
And chid her barking waves into attention,
And fell Charybdis murmur'd soft applause:
Yet they in pleasing slumber lull'd the sense
And in sweet madnesse rob'd it of it selfe,
But such a sacred, and home-felt delight,
Such sober certainty of waking blisse
I never heard till now. Ile speak to her
And she shall be my Queene. Haile forreine wonder
Whom certaine these rough shades did never breed
Unlesse the Goddesse that in rurall shrine
Dwell'st here with Pan, or Silvan, by blest Song
Forbidding every bleake unkindly Fog
To touch the prosperous growth of this tall wood.
LADIE. Nay gentle Shepherd ill is lost that praise
That is addrest to unattending Eares,
Not any boast of skill, but extreame shift
How to regaine my fever'd companie
Compell'd me to awake the courteous Echo
To give me answer from her mossie Couch.
COMUS. What chance good Ladie hath bereft you thus?
LADIE. Dim darknesse, and this leavie Labyrinth.
COMUS. Could that divide you from neere-usheringguides?
LADIE. They left me weary on a grassie terfe.
COMUS. By falsehood, or discourtesie, or why?
LADIE. To seeke i'th vally some coole friendly Spring.
COMUS. And left your faire side all unguarded Ladie?
LADIE. They were but twaine, & purpos'd quick return.
COMUS. Perhaps fore-stalling night prævented them.
LADIE. How easie my misfortune is to hit!

COMUS. Imports their losse, beside the præsent need?
LADIE. No lesse then if I should my brothers lose.
COMUS. Were they of manly prime, or youthful bloom?
LADIE. As smooth as Hebe's their unrazor'd lips.
COMUS. Two such I saw, what time the labour'd Oxe
In his loose traces from the furrow came,
And the swink't hedger at his Supper sate;
I saw them under a greene mantling vine
That crawls along the side of yon small hill,
Plucking ripe clusters from the tender shoots,
Their port was more then humaine; as they stood,
I tooke it for a faërie vision
Of some gay creatures of the element
That in the colours of the Rainbow live
And play i'th plighted clouds, I was aw-strooke,
And as I past, I worshipt; if those you seeke
It were a journey like the path to heav'n
To helpe you find them.
LADIE. Gentle villager
What readiest way would bring me to that place?
COMUS. Due west it rises from this shrubbie point.
LADIE. To find out that good shepheard I suppose
In such a scant allowance of starre light
Would overtask the best land-pilots art
Without the sure guesse of well-practiz'd feet.
COMUS. I know each lane, and every alley greene
Dingle, or bushie dell of this wild wood,
And every boskie bourne from side to side
My daylie walks and ancient neighbourhood,
And if your stray attendance be yet lodg'd
Or shroud within these limits, I shall know
Ere morrow wake, or the low-roosted larke
From her thach't palate rowse, if otherwise
I can conduct you Ladie to a low
But loyall cottage, where you may be safe
Till further quest.'
LADIE. Shepheard I take thy word,
And trust thy honest offer'd courtesie,

Which oft is sooner found in lowly sheds
With smoakie rafters, then in tapstrie halls,
And courts of Princes, where it first was nam'd,
And yet is most prætended: in a place
Lesse warranted then this, or lesse secure
I cannot be, that I should feare to change it,
Eye me blest Providence, and square my triall
To my proportion'd strength. Shepheard lead on.—

THE TWO BROTHERS.

ELD. BRO. Unmuffle yee faint stars, and thou fair moon
That wontst to love the travailers benizon
Stoope thy pale visage through an amber cloud
And disinherit Chaos, that raigns here
In double night of darknesse, and of shades;
Or if your influence be quite damm'd up
With black usurping mists, some gentle taper
Though a rush candle from a wicker hole
Of some clay habitation visit us
With thy long levell'd rule of streaming light
And thou shalt be our starre of Arcadie
Or Tyrian Cynosure.

SEC. BRO. Or if our eyes
Be barr'd that happinesse, might we but heare
The folded flocks pen'd in their watled cotes,
Or sound of pastoral reed with oaten stops,
Or whistle from the Lodge, or village cock
Count the night watches to his featherie Dames,
T'would be some solace yet, some little chearing
In this close dungeon of innumerous bowes.
But ô [oh] that haplesse virgin our lost sister
Where may she wander now, whether betake her
From the chill dew, amongst rude burs and thistles?
Perhaps some cold banke is her boulster now
Or 'gainst the rugged barke of some broad Elme
Leans her unpillow'd head fraught with sad fears.
What if in wild amazement, and affright
Or while we speake within the direfull graspe

Of Savage hunger, or of Savage heat?
ELD. BRO. Peace brother, be not over exquisite
To cast the fashion of uncertaine evils,
For grant they be so, while they rest unknowne
What need a man forestall his date of griefe
And run to meet what he would most avoid?
Or if they be but false alarms of Feare
How bitter is such selfe-delusion?
I doe not thinke my sister so to seeke
Or so unprincipl'd in vertues book
And the sweet peace that goodnesse bosoms ever
As that the single want of light, and noise
(Not being in danger, as I trust she is not)
Could stir the constant mood of her calme thoughts
And put them into mis-becomming plight.
Vertue could see to doe what vertue would
By her owne radiant light, though Sun and Moon
Were in the flat Sea sunck, and Wisdoms selfe
Oft seeks to sweet retired Solitude
Where with her best nurse Contemplation
She plumes her feathers, and lets grow her wings
That in the various bustle of resort
Were all to ruffl'd, and sometimes impair'd.
He that has light within his owne cleere brest
May sit i' th center, and enjoy bright day,
But he that hides a darke soule, and foule thoughts
Benighted walks under the mid-day Sun,
Himselfe is his owne dungeon.
SEC. BRO. 'Tis most true
That musing meditation most affects
The Pensive secrecie of desert cell
Farre from the cheerefull haunt of men, and heards,
And sits as safe as in a Senat house
For who would rob an Hermit of his weeds
His few books, or his beades, or maple dish,
Or doe his gray hairs any violence?
But beautie like the faire Hesperian tree
Laden with blooming gold, had need the guard

Of dragon watch with uninchanted eye
To save her blossoms, and defend her fruit
From the rash hand of bold Incontinence.
You may as well spread out the unsun'd heaps
Of misers treasure by an outlaws den
And tell me it is safe, as bid me hope
Danger will winke on opportunitie
And let a single helplesse mayden passe
Uninjur'd in this wild surrounding wast.
Of night, or lonelynesse it recks me not
I feare the dred events that dog them both,
Lest some ill greeting touch attempt the person
Of our unowned sister.
ELD. BRO. I doe not brother
Inferre, as if I thought my sisters state
Secure without all doubt, or controversie:
Yet where an equall poise of hope, and feare
Does arbitrate th' event, my nature is
That I encline to hope, rather then feare
And gladly banish squint suspicion.
My sister is not so defencelesse lest
As you imagine, she has a hidden strength
Which you remember not.
SEC. BRO. What hidden strength
Unlesse the strength of heav'n, if meane that?
ELD. BRO. I meane that too, but yet a hidden strength
Which if heav'n gave it, may be term'd her owne:
'Tis chastitie, my brother, chastitie:
She that has that, is clad in compleat steele,
And like a quiver'd nymph with arrowes keene
May trace huge forrests, and unharbour'd heaths
Infamous hills, and sandy perillous wilds
Where through the sacred rays of chastitie
No savage fierce, bandite, or mountaneere
Will dare to soyle her virgin puritie
Yea there, where very desolation dwells
By grots, and caverns shag'd with horrid shades
She may passe on with unblench't majestie

Be it not done in pride, or in presumption.
Some say no evill thing that walks by night
In fog, or fire, by lake, or moorish fen
Blew meager hag, or stubborne unlayd ghost
That breaks his magicke chaines at curfeu time
No goblin, or swart Faërie of the mine
Has hurtfull power ore true virginity.
Doe yee beleeve me yet, or shall I call
Antiquity from the old schools of Greece
To testifie the armes of Chastitie?
Hence had the huntresse Dian her dred bow
Faire silver-shafted Queene for ever chast
Wherewith we tam'd the brinded lionesse
And spotted mountaine pard, but set at nought
The frivolous bolt of Cupid, gods and men
Fear'd her sterne frowne, & she was queen oth' woods.
What was that snakie headed Gorgon sheild
That wise Minerva wore, unconquer'd virgin
Wherewith she freez'd her foes to congeal'd stone?
But rigid looks of Chast austeritie
And noble grace that dash't brute violence
With sudden adoration, and blancke aw.
So deare to heav'n is saintly chastitie
That when a soule is found sincerely so,
A thousand liveried angels lackie her
Driving farre off each thing of sinne, and guilt,
And in cleere dreeme, and solemne vision
Tell her of things that no grosse eare can heare,
Till oft converse with heav'nly habitants
Begin to cast a beame on th' outward shape
The unpolluted temple of the mind
And turnes it by degrees to the souls essence
Till all bee made immortall; but when lust
By unchast looks, loose gestures, and foule talke
But most by leud, and lavish act of sin
Lets in defilement to the inward parts,
The soule growes clotted by contagion,
Imbodies, and imbrutes, till she quite loose

The divine propertie of her first being.
Such are those thick, and gloomie shadows damp
Oft seene in Charnell vaults, and Sepulchers
Hovering, and sitting by a new made grave
As loath to leave the body that it lov'd,
And link't it selfe by carnall sensualitie
To a degenerate and degraded state.
SEC. BRO. How charming is divine Philosophie!
Not harsh, and crabbed as dull fools suppose,
But musicall as is Apollo's lute,
And a perpetuall feast of nectar'd sweets
Where no crude surfet raigns.
ELD. BRO. List, list I heare
Some farre off hallow breake the silent aire.
SEC. BRO. Me thought so too, what should it be?
ELD. BRO. For certaine
Either some one like us night founder'd here,
Or else some neighbour wood man, or at worst
Some roaving robber calling to his fellows.
SEC. BRO. Heav'n keepe my sister, agen agen and neere,
Best draw, and stand upon our guard.
ELD. BRO. Ile hallow,
If he be friendly he comes well, if not
Defence is a good cause, and Heav'n be for us.

THE ATTENDANT SPIRIT HABITED LIKE A SHEPHEARD.

That hallow I should know, what are you, speake,
Come not too neere, you fall on iron stakes else.
SPIRIT. What voice is that, my yong Lord? speak agen.
SEC. BRO. O brother 'tis my father Shepheard sure.
ELD. BRO. Thyrsis? whose artfull strains have oft delayd
The huddling brook to heare his madrigale,
And sweeten'd every muskrose of the dale,
How cam'st thou here good Swaine, hath any ram
Slip't from the fold, or yong kid lost his dam,
Or straggling weather the pen't flock forsook,
How couldst thou find this darke sequester'd nook?

SPIRIT. O my lov'd masters heire, and his next joy
I came not here on such a triviall toy
As a strayd Ewe, or to pursue the stealth
Of pilfering wolfe, not all the fleecie wealth
That doth enrich these downs is worth a thought
To this my errand, and the care it brought.
But ô [oh] my virgin Ladie where is she,
How chance she is not in your companie?
ELD. BRO. To tell thee sadly shepheard, without blame
Or our neglect, wee lost her as wee came.
SPIRIT. Aye me unhappie then my fears are true.
ELD. BRO. What fears good Thyrsis? prethee briefly shew.
SPIRIT. Ile tell you, 'tis not vaine, or fabulous
(Though so esteem'd by shallow ignorance)
What the sage Poëts taught by th' heav'nly Muse
Storied of old in high immortall verse
Of dire Chimera's and inchanted Iles
And rifted rocks whose entrance leads to hell,
For such there be, but unbeliefe is blind.
Within the navill of this hideous wood
Immur'd in cypresse shades a Sorcerer dwells
Of Bacchus, and of Circe borne, great Comus,
Deepe skill'd in all his mother's witcheries,
And here to every thirstie wanderer
By slie enticement gives his banefull cup
With many murmurs mixt, whose pleasing poison
The visage quite transforms of him that drinks,
And the inglorious likenesse of a beast
Fixes instead, unmoulding reasons mintage
Character'd in the face; this have I learn't
Tending my flocks hard by i' th hilly crofts
That brow this bottome glade, whence night by night
He and his monstrous rout are heard to howle
Like stabl'd wolves, or tigers at their prey
Doing abhorred rites to Hecate
In their obscured haunts of inmost bowres.
Yet have they many baits, and guilefull spells
T' inveigle, and invite th' unwarie sense

Of them that passe unweeting by the way.
This evening late by then the chewing flocks
Had ta'ne their supper on the favourite herbe
Of Knot-grass dew-besprent, and were in fold
I sate me downe to watch upon a bank
With ivie canopied, and interwove
With flaunting hony-suckle, and began
Wrapt in a pleasing fit of melancholy
To meditate my rural minstrelsie
Till fancie had her fill, but ere a close
The wonted roare was up amidst the woods,
And filld the aire with barbarous dissonance
At which I ceas't, and listen'd them a while
Till an unusual stop of sudden silence
Gave respit to the drowsie frighted steeds
That draw the litter of close-curtain'd sleepe.
At last a soft, and solemne breathing sound
Rose like a steame of rich distill'd Perfumes
And stole upon the aire, that even Silence
Was tooke e're she was ware, and wish't she might
Deny her nature, and be never more
Still to be so displac't. I was all eare,
And took in strains that might create a soule
Under the ribs of Death, but ô [oh] ere long
Too well I did perceive it was the voice
Of my most honour'd Lady your dear sister.
Amaz'd I stood, harrow'd with griefe and feare,
And ô [oh] poore haplesse nightingale thought I
How sweet thou sing'st, how neere the deadly snare!
Then downe the lawns I ran with headlong hast
Through paths, and turnings often trod by day
Till guided by my eare I found the place
Where that dam'd wisard hid in slie disguise
(For so by certain signs I knew) had met
Alreadie, ere my best speed could prævent
The aidlesse innocent Ladie his wish't prey,
Who gently ask't if he had seene such two
Supposing him some neighbour villager;

Longer I durst not stay, but soone I guess't
Yee were the two she mean't, with that I sprung
Into swift flight till I had found you here,
But farther know I not.
SEC. BRO. O night and shades
How are yee joyn'd with hell in triple knot
Against th' unarmed weaknesse of one virgin
Alone, and helplesse! is this the confidence
You gave me brother?
ELD. BRO. Yes, and keep it still,
Leane on it safely, not a period
Shall be unsaid for me; against the threats
Of malice or of sorcerie, or that power
Which erring men call Chance, this I hold firme,
Vertue may be assail'd, but never hurt,
Surpriz'd by unjust force, but not enthrall'd,
Yea even that which mischiefe meant most harme,
Shall in the happie triall prove most glorie.
But evill on it selfe shall backe recoyle
And mixe no more with goodnesse, when at last
Gather'd like scum, and setl'd to it selfe
It shall bee in eternall restlesse change
Selfe fed, and selfe consum'd, if this faile
The pillar'd firmanent is rottennesse,
And earths base built on stubble. But come let's on.
Against th' opposing will and arme of heav'n
May never this just sword be lifted up,
But for that damn'd magician, let him be girt
With all the greisly legions that troope
Under the sootie flag of Acheron,
Harpyies and Hydra's, or all the monstrous bugs
'Twixt Africa, and Inde, Ile find him out
And force him to restore his purchase backe
Or drag him by the curles, and cleave his scalpe
Downe to the hipps.
SPIRIT. Alas good ventrous youth,
I love thy courage yet, and bold Emprise,
But here thy sword can doe thee little stead,

Farre other arms, and other weapons must
Be those that quell the might of hellish charms,
He with his bare wand can unthred thy joynts
And crumble all thy sinewes.
ELD. BRO. Why prethee shepheard
How durst thou then thy selfe approach so nëere
As to make this relation?
SPIRIT. Care and utmost shifts
How to secure the Ladie from surprisall
Brought to my mind a certaine shepheard lad
Of small regard to see to, yet well skill'd
In every vertuous plant, and healing herbe
That spreds her verdant leafe to th' morning ray,
He lov'd me well, and oft would beg me sing,
Which when I did, he on the tender grasse
Would sit, and hearken even to extasie,
And in requitall ope his leather'n scrip,
And shew me simples of a thousand names
Telling their strange, and vigorous faculties,
Amongst the rest a small unsightly root,
But of divine effect, he cull'd me out;
The leafe was darkish, and had prickles on it,
But in another Countrie, as he said,
Bore a bright golden flowre, but not in this soyle:
Unknowne, and like esteem'd, and the dull swayne
Treads on it dayly with his clouted shoone,
And yet more med'cinall is it then that Moly
That Hermes once to wise Ulysses gave,
He call'd it Hæmony, and gave it me
And bad me keepe it as of soveraine use
'Gainst all inchantments, mildew blast, or damp
Or gastly furies apparition;
I purs't it up, but little reck'ning made
Till now that this extremity compell'd,
But now I find it true, for by this means
I knew the foule inchanter though disguis'd,
Enter'd the very lime twigs of his spells,
And yet came off, if you have this about you

(As I will give you when wee goe) you may
Boldly assault the necromancers hall,
Where if he be, with dauntlesse hardihood
And brandish't blade rush on him, breake his glasse,
And shed the lushious liquor on the ground
But sease his wand, though he and his curst crew
Feirce signe of battaile make, and menace high,
Or like the sons of Vulcan vomit smoake,
Yet will they soone retire, if he but shrinke.
ELD. BRO. Thyrsis lead on apace Ile follow thee,
And some good angell beare a sheild before us.

The Scene Changes to a stately palace set out with all manner of deliciousnesse, soft musicke, tables spred with all dainties. Comus appeares with his rabble, and the Ladie set in an inchanted chaire to whom he offers his glasse, which she puts by, and goes about to rise.

COMUS. Nay Ladie sit; if I but wave this wand,
Your nerves are all chain'd up in alabaster,
And you a statue; or as Daphne was
Root bound that fled Apollo.
LADIE. Foole doe not boast,
Thou canst not touch the freedome of my mind
With all thy charms, although this corporall rind
Thou hast immanacl'd, while heav'n sees good.
COMUS. Why are you vext Ladie, why doe you frowne?
Here dwell no frowns, nor anger, from these gates
Sorrow flies farre: see here be all the pleasurs
That fancie can beget on youthfull thoughts
When the fresh blood grows lively, and returns
Brisk as the April buds in primrose season.
And first behold this cordial julep here
That flames, and dances in his crystall bounds
With spirits of balme, and fragrant syrops mixt.
Not that Nepenthes which the wife of Thone
In Ægypt gave to Jove borne Helena
Is of such power to stirre up joy as this,
To life so friendly, or so coole to thirst.

Why should you be so cruell to your selfe,
And to those daintie limms which nature lent
For gentle usage, and soft delicacie?
But you invert the cov'nants of her trust,
And harshly deale like an ill borrower
With that which you receiv'd on other termes,
Scorning the unexempt condition,
By which all mortall frailty must subsist,
Refreshment after toile, ease after paine,
That have been tir'd all day without repast,
And timely rest have wanted, but faire virgin
This will restore all soone.
LADIE. T'will not false traitor,
T'will not restore the truth and honestie
That thou hast banish't from thy tongue with lies,
Was this the cottage, and the safe abode
Thou told'st me of? what grim aspects are these,
These ougly-headed monsters? Mercie guard me!
Hence with thy brewd inchantments foule deceiver,
Hast thou betray'd my credulous innocence
With visor'd falshood, and base forgerie,
And wouldst thou seek againe to trap me here
With lickerish baits fit to ensnare a brute?
Were it a draft for Juno when she banquets
I would not tast thy treasonous offer; none
But such as are good men can give good things,
And that which is not good, is not delicious
To a wel-govern'd and wise appetite.
COMUS. O foolishnesse of men! that lend their eares
To those budge doctors of the Stoick furre,
And fetch their præcepts from the Cynick tub,
Praising the leane, and sallow Abstinence.
Wherefore did Nature powre her bounties forth
With such a full and unwithdrawing hand,
Covering the earth with odours, fruits, and flocks
Thronging the seas with spawne innumerable
But all to please, and sate the curious tast?
And set to work millions of spinning worms,

That in their green shops weave the smooth-hair'd silk
To deck her Sons, and that no corner might
Be vacant of her plentie in her owne loyns
She hutch't th' all worshipt ore and precious gems
To store her children with; if all the world
Should in a pet of temperance feed on Pulse,
Drink the clear streame, and nothing weare but Freize,
Th'all-giver would be unthank't, would be unprais'd,
Not halfe his riches known, and yet despis'd,
And we should serve him as a grudging master,
As a penurious niggard of his wealth,
And live like Natures bastards, not her sons,
Who would be quite surcharg'd with her own weight,
And strangl'd with her wast fertilitie;
Th' earth cumber'd, and the wing'd aire dark't with plumes,
The heards would over-multitude their Lords,
The sea ore-fraught would swell, and th' unsought diamonds
Would so emblaze the forehead of the Deep,
And so bestudde with stars that they below
Would grow inur'd to light, and come at last
To gaze upon the Sun with shameless brows.
List Ladie be not coy, and be not cosen'd
With that same vaunted name Virginitie,
Beautie is natures coine, must not be hoorded,
But must be currant, and the good thereof
Consists in mutuall and parktaken blisse,
Unsavourie in th' injoyment of it selfe
If you let slip time, like a neglected rose
It withers on the stalke with languish't head.
Beautie is nature's brag, and must be showne
In courts, at feasts, and high solemnities
Where most may wonder at the workmanship;
It is for homely features to keepe home,
They had their name thence; course complexions
And cheeks of sorry graine will serve to ply
The sampler, and to teize the huswifes wooll.
What need a vermeil-tinctur'd lip for that
Love-darting eyes, or tresses like the Morne

There was another meaning in these gifts?
Thinke what, and be adviz'd, you are but yong yet.
LADIE. I had not thought to have unlockt my lips
In this unhallow'd aire, but that this Jugler
Would thinke to charme my judgement, as mine eyes
Obtruding false rules pranckt in reasons garbe.
I hate when vice can bolt her arguments
And vertue has no tongue to check her pride:
Impostor doe not charge most innocent nature
As if she would her children should be riotous
With her abundance, she good cateresse
Means her provision only to the good
That live according to her sober laws
And holy dictate of spare Temperance,
If every just man that now pines with want
Had but a moderate, and beseeming share
Of that which lewdy-pamper'd Luxurie
Now heaps upon some few with vast excesse,
Natures full blessings would be well dispenc't
In unsuperfluous even proportion,
And she no whit encomber'd with her store,
And then the giver would be better thank't,
His praise due paid, for swinish gluttony
Ne're looks to heav'n amidst his gorgeous feast,
But with besotted base ingratitude
Cramms, and blasphemes his feeder. Shall I goe on?
Or have I said enough? to him that dares
Arme his profane tongue with reproachfull words
Against the Sun-clad power of Chastitie
Faine would I something say, yet to what end?
Thou hast nor Eare, nor Soule to apprehend
The sublime notion and high mysterie
That must be utter'd to unfold the sage
And serious doctrine of Virginitie,
And thou art worthy that thou shouldst not know
More happinesse then this thy præsent lot.
Enjoy your deere Wit, and gay Rhetorick
That hath so well beene taught her dazling fence,

Thou art not fit to heare thy selfe convinc't;
Yet should I trie, the uncontrouled worth
Of this pure cause would kindle my rap't spirits
To such a flame of sacred vehemence,
That dumb things would be mov'd to sympathize,
And the brute Earth would lend her nerves, and shake,
Till all thy magick structures rear'd so high
Were shatter'd into heaps ore thy false head.

COMUS. She fables not, I feele that I doe feare
Her words set off by some superior power;
And though not mortall, yet a cold shuddring dew
Dips me all o're, as when the wrath of Jove
Speaks thunder, and the chaines of Erebus
To some of Saturns crew. I must dissemble,
And try her yet more strongly. Come; no more,
This is meere morall babble, and direct
Against the canon laws of our foundation,
I must not suffer this, yet 'tis but the lees
And setlings of a melancholy blood;
But this will cure all streight, one sip of this
Will bathe the drooping spirits in delight
Beyond the blisse of dreams. Be wise, and tast.—

The brothers rush in with swords drawne, wrest his glasse out of his hand, and breake it against the ground; his rout make signe of resistance, but are all driven in; the attendant Spirit comes in.

SPIRIT. What, have you let the false enchanter scape?
O yee mistooke, yee should have snatcht his wand
And bound him fast; without his rod revers't,
And backward mutters of dissevering power
Wee cannot free the Ladie that sits here
In stonie fetters fixt, and motionlesse;
Yet stay, be not disturb'd, now I bethinke me,
Some other meanes I have which may be us'd,
Which once of Melibæus old I learnt
The soothest shepheard that ere pipe't on plains.
There is a gentle nymph not farre from hence

That with moist curb sways the smooth Severn stream,
Sabrina is her name, a virgin pure,
Whilome shee was the daughter of Locrine,
That had the scepter from his father Brute.
She guiltlesse damsell flying the mad pursuit
Of her enraged stepdam Guendolen
Commended her faire innocence to the flood
That stay'd her flight with his crosse-flowing course,
The water Nymphs that in the bottome playd
Held up their pearled wrists and tooke her in,
Bearing her straite to aged Nereus hall
Who piteous of her woes reard her lanke head,
And gave her to his daughters to imbathe
In nectar'd lavers strewd with asphodil,
And through the porch, and inlet of each sense
Dropt in ambroisal oyles till she reviv'd,
And underwent a quicke, immortall change
Made goddesse of the river; still she retaines
Her maiden gentlenesse, and often at eve
Visits the heards along the twilight meadows,
Helping all urchin blasts, and ill lucke signes
That the shrewd medling elfe delights to make,
Which she with precious viold liquors heales.
For which the shepheards at their festivalls
Carroll her goodnesse lowd in rusticke layes,
And throw sweet garland wreaths into her streame
Of pancies, pinks, and gaudie daffadills.
And, as the old Swaine said, she can unlocke
The clasping charme, and thaw the numming spell,
If she be right invok't in warbled Song,
For maidenhood she loves, and will be swift
To aid a virgin such as was her selfe
In hard besetting need, this will I trie .
And adde the power of some adjuring verse.

SONG.

Sabrina faire
Listen where thou art sitting

Under the glassie, coole, translucent wave,
In twisted braids of lillies knitting
The loose traine of thy amber-dropping haire,
Listen for deare honours sake
Goddesse of the silver lake
Listen and save.

Listen and appeare to us
In name of great Oceanus,
By th' earth shaking Neptun's mace
And Tethys grave magesticke pace,
By hoarie Nereus wrincled looke,
And the Carpathian wisards hooke,
By scalie Tritons winding shell.
And old sooth saying Glaucus spell,
By Leucothea's lovely hands,
And her son that rules the strands,
By Thetis tinsel-slipper'd feet;
And the songs of Sirens sweet,
By dead Parthenope's deare tomb,
And faire Ligea's golden comb,
Wherewith she sits on diamond rocks
Sleeking her soft alluring locks,
By all the Nymphs that nightly dance
Upon thy streams with wilie glance,
Rise, rise and heave thy rosie head
From thy coral-paven bed,
And bridle in thy headlong wave
Till thou our summons answerd have.
Listen and save.

SABRINA RISES ATTENDED BY WATER NIMPHES AND SINGS.

By the rushie fringed banke,
Where growes the willow and the osier dancke
My sliding chariot stayes,
Thicke set with agat, and the azurne sheene
Of turkkis blew, and Emrould greene

That in the channell strayes,
Whilst from off the waters fleet
Thus I set my printlesse feet
Ore the cowslips velvet head,
That bends not as I tread,
Gentle swaine at thy request
I am here.

SPIRIT. Goddesse deare
Wee implore thy powerfull hand
To undoe the charmed band
Of true virgin here distrest,
Through the force, and through the wile
Of unblest inchanter vile.

SABRINA. Shepheard tis my office best
To helpe insnared chastitie;
Brightest Ladie looke on me,
Thus I sprinckle on thy brest
Drops that from my fountaine pure
I have kept of precious cure,
Thrice upon thy fingers tip,
Thrice upon thy rubied lip,
Next this marble venom'd seate
Smear'd with gummes of glutenous heate
I touch with chast palmes moist and cold,
Now the spell hath lost his hold.
And I must hast ere morning houre
To waite in Amphitrite's bowre.

SABRINA DESCENDS AND THE LADIE RISES OUT OF HER SEATE.

SPIRIT. Virgin, daughter of Locrine
Sprung of old Anchises line
May thy brimmed waves for this
Their full tribute never misse
From a thousand pettie rills,
That tumble downe the snowie hills:
Summer drouth, or singed aire

Never scorch thy tresses faire,
Nor wet Octobers torrent flood
Thy molten crystall fill with mudde,
May thy billowes rowle a shoare
The beryll, and the golden ore,
May thy loftie head be crown'd
With many a tower, and terrasse round,
And here and there thy banks upon
With groves of myrrhe, and cinnamon.
Come Ladie while heaven lends us grace,
Let us fly this cursed place,
Lest the sorcerer us intice
With some other new device.
Not a wast, or needlesse sound
Till we come to holyer ground,
I shall be your faithfull guide
Through this gloomie covert wide,
And not many furlongs thence
Is your Fathers residence,
Where this night are met in state
Many a friend to gratulate
His wish't presence, and beside
All the Swains that there abide,
With Jiggs, and rurall dance resort,
Wee shall catch them at their sport,
And our suddaine comming there
Will double all their mirth, and chere,
Come let us hast the starrs are high
But night sits monarch yet in the mid skie.

The Scene changes presenting Ludlow towne and the Presidents Castle, then come in Countrie dancers, after them the attendant Spirit with the two Brothers and the Ladie.

SONG.

SPIRIT. Back shepheards, back enough your play,
Till next Sun-shine holiday,

Here be without duck or nod,
Other trippings to be trod
Of lighter toes, and such Court guise
As Mercury did first devise
With the mincing Dryades
On the lawns, and on the leas.

THIS SECOND SONG PRÆSENTS THEM TO THEIR FATHER AND MOTHER.

Noble Lord, and Lady bright,
I have brought yee new delight,
Here behold so goodly growne,
Three faire branches of your owne,
Heav'n hath timely tri'd their youth,
Their faith, their patience, and their truth,
And sent them here through hard assays
With a crowne of deathlesse Praise,
To triumph in victorious dance
Ore sensuall Folly, and Intemperance.

THE DANCES ENDED, THE SPIRIT EPILOGIZES.

SPIRIT. To the Ocean now I flie,
And those happie climes that lie
Where day never shuts his eye,
Up in the broad fields of the skie:
There I suck the liquid ayre
All amidst the gardens faire
Of Hesperus, and his daughters three
That sing about the golden tree,
Along the crisped shades, and bowres
Revells the spruce and jocond Spring,
The Graces, and the rosie-bosom'd Howres
Thither all their bounties bring,
That there æternall Summer dwells
And west winds, with muskie wing
About the cedar'n alleys fling
Nard, and Cassia's balmie smells.

Iris there with humid bow
Waters the odorous banks that blow
Flowers of more mingled hew
Then her purfl'd scarfe can shew,
And drenches with Elysian dew
(List mortalls, if your eares be true)
Beds of Hyacinth, and roses,
Where young Adonis oft reposes,
Waxing well of his deepe wound
In slumber soft, and on the ground
Sadly sits th' Assyrian Queene;
But farre above in spangled sheene
Celestiall Cupid her fam'd Son advanc't,
Holds his deare Psyche sweet intranc't
After her wandring labours long,
Till free consent the gods among
Make her his æternall Bride,
And from her faire unspotted side
Two blissfull twins are to be borne,
Youth, and Joy; so Jove hath sworne.
But now my taske is smoothly done,
I can fly, or I can run
Quickly to the greene earths end,
Where the bow'd welkin slow doth bend,
And from thence can soare as soone
To the corners of the Moone.
Mortalls that would follow me,
Love vertue, she alone is free,
She can teach yee how to clime
Higher then the Sphærie chime;
Or if vertue feeble were
Heav'n it selfe would stoope to her.

THE PRINCIPALL PERSONS IN THIS MASKE; WERE

THE LORD BRACLY, MR. THOMAS EGERTON,
THE LADY ALICE EGERTON.

THE END.

HERE ENDS COMUS, A MASKE, BY JOHN MILTON.

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